

# WILLAPA WHISTLER

*A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society*

Volume 45 // Issue 2

Summer 2019



Female hooded mergansers --- Image by Kim Fields seen near South Jetty at Fort Stevens State Park

## Join us for the 2019 Willapa Hills Annual Summer Picnic

The Willapa Hills Audubon Annual picnic will be held on Sunday, July 21, 2019 from 2:00 PM until 5:00 PM at the Brandt residence in Cathlamet WA. Members and guests are invited to an afternoon of lively chat, good food and, of course, bird watching. Attendees are asked to bring one covered dish (a salad, entree, dessert or snack) to feed 4 to 6 people. Each person should bring their own plates, cups and tableware. Ice, water, iced tea, napkins, paper towels, tables and chairs will be provided. Sun and rain protection is available if needed.

The Brandt residence is located on the east edge of Cathlamet on the south side of State Hwy 4.

**To get to the picnic from Longview**, look for the yellow 40-mph speed sign as you enter Cathlamet. Turn left onto Island View Drive just past the speed sign.

**To get to the picnic from the west**, drive through Cathlamet on Hwy 4. As you are leaving Cathlamet look for a yellow 55-mph speed sign. Immediately turn right onto Island View Drive.

Stay in the right lane and drive all the way back to the end of the road (0.1-mi.). There is lots of space for parking.

**So, mark your calendars for July 21!**

## Come Volunteer at the Children's Discovery Museum

**By Ann Cordero, Nature Niche Chair**

*"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous."*—Aristotle

Willapa Hills Audubon Society is a partner with the Children's Discovery Museum at the Three Rivers Mall in Kelso. WHAS sponsors the Nature Niche, a series of touch tables and drawers filled with natural objects like feathers, nests, bones, rocks, minerals, fossils, shells, insects and plant parts. Microscopes are available for close-up viewing. Children of all ages are welcome there, but most of our patrons are in second grade or younger and accompanied by their parents. Admission is free

*...continued on page 5*

## Slow Down and Smell the Roses

**By President Steve Puddicombe**

This time of year I am always reminded of the dangers for animals trying to live in the interface with humans. As birds and mammals most visibly enter the spaces we inhabit as they reproduce and feed, inevitably our roadways become killing fields. Whether a doe and fawn crossing to greener pasture or swallows sweeping insects from indiscriminate skies, our highways are literally the example of the collision of man and nature.

I've had many poignant experiences in my driving history: there was the time I rounded a corner late at night in my old '63 Chevy truck and had to go over a great horned owl. It survived, stunned, and when I picked it up clutched me with its huge talons. I stopped in Cathlamet to inquire about help and left it in the truck, moribund and on its side. But when I returned it had climbed onto the steering wheel and flew off into the moonlit sky when I opened the door. A happy ending.

Another time a yellow warbler lay in the roadway as I drove past and, stopping, a truck went by before I could get to it, spinning and flinging it about in the wind blast like thistle down. But it was alive and I placed it on a fence post to recover.

Not all endings have been so redeeming:

*...continued on page 5*

## In this issue of the Whistler:

- 2 Membership Form  
NW Birding Events
- 3 Purple Martin Nest Boxes at the Coast
- 4 Riverside Community Church  
is now open to Vaux's Swifts
- 6 Programs and Fieldtrips

## Support our mission, join WHAS today!

### Check type of Membership:

- ☐ New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ Renewal Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

Enclosed is my additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership includes 4 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually.

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible

For membership in National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/>.

Please make your check payable to:

WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:

**WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Y14:7XCH rev. 2007

### Thank you for supporting your local Audubon chapter -- Willapa Hills Audubon Society!

We will not share your contact information with anyone.

\*) To announce **occasional** reminders and to communicate last minute changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.

✂ -----Clip

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Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail

Other options:

- ☐ I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email  
(Add your email address below)
- ☐ Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Add me to your announcement email list\*

### Long Beach Peninsula Bird Festival 2019

Wings over Willapa - September 26 - 29, 2019. The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge are hosting a birding, art and nature festival on Long Beach Peninsula celebrating the Wildlife Refuge with a weekend full of classes, workshops, guided tours and more. More info: <https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/wings-over-willapa>

### Pudget Sound Bird Fest 2019

Come to Edmonds, Washington, September 13-15, 2019. Our three-day event includes speakers, guided walks, land and water-based field trips, exhibits, and educational activities for children and adults. More info and BirdFest registration at [www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org/](http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org/)

### ACOW Fall 2019

**Host Region:** Southwest Chapters (Vancouver, Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, Tahoma, Black Hills)  
**When:** September 27-29, 2019  
**Where:** Vancouver Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA 98661

This year's Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) will focus on big initiatives that could impact 100% of Audubon chapters. Key speakers include the director of Audubon's new Migratory Birds Initiative and the leader of the Campus Chapter Program. There will be time to celebrate recent achievements, in the legislature (e.g., 100% Clean Energy), and across the landscape (e.g., completion of the Sagebrush Songbird Survey in Eastern Washington.) and honor longtime Audubon leader Helen Engle, who exemplified what it means to be 100% in for the birds.

Watch for more info here:

<http://wa.audubon.org/chapters-centers/chapter-meetings>



## Purple Martin Nest Boxes at the Coast

By Suzy Whitley

Purple Martins are a species of concern. They are the largest members of the swallow family and traditionally nest in cavities. In order for the population to succeed and grow they are now solely dependent on humans to provide man made nesting boxes. Purple Martins are colony nesters and very tolerant of people and human activity. They forage almost entirely in the air, as high as 500 feet, and very low over water. They feed on a wide variety of flying insects. After spending winters in South America Purple Martins will begin their long migration back to North America to where they nested the previous year, arriving in April or May depending on location.

I realized that the Purple Martins here along the coast were struggling to expand their population. There have been small populations at the Ports of Ilwaco and Chinook for years. I wanted to start this project to provide more nesting opportunities for the Martins and grow the population. I wrote a proposal to the Willapa Hills Audubon Society and after they review it, they gladly agreed to fund the project. Thank you!

Randy Hill a retired federal biologist with volunteer status is leading a monitoring and color-banding project for Western Purple Martin recovery along the Lower Columbia River in SW Washington and was helpful with my many questions.

Guy Glen Jr. the commissioner of the Ports of Chinook and Ilwaco reviewed my proposal and was supportive of the project. He choose the piling location within the ports and supplied a maintenance worker, Darrell Glasson to run the ports barge and help install the nesting boxes.



Suzy Whitley



Suzy Whitley



I am very fortunate to have a friend that was glad to build and install the Purple Martin nest boxes on pilings at the ports. (He wishes to remain anonymous.)

The martins started to return to the coast on April 22 and use the nest boxes. Their placement at the Port of Ilwaco along Outer Harbor Way SE will give people a chance to enjoy and observe the Martins. You can also view them from the parking lot at the Chinook Marina on the pilings out along the breakwater by the mouth of the jetty.

*All images by Suzy Whitley*



## Riverside Community Church is now open to Vaux's Swifts

By Darrel Whipple

The de-grating deed is done. After excluding birds for 27 years, the old brick chimney is now open to Vaux's Swifts at Riverside Community Church in Rainier. It is the largest chimney in Rainier and one of the largest on the migration flyway, able to accommodate 20,000 roosting birds at one time, according to Larry Schwitters of Issaquah, founder and coordinator of Vaux's Happening.

Larry drove down to Rainier on this last day of April, expecting to watch the grate removal operation as a spectator. But he ended up fishing the grate out himself thirty feet up in the manlift piloted by Pastor Paul Rice. Nobody showed up to watch or to cover the story or take pictures, except me (without a camera). Thankfully, Paul's teenage son David was there to help and run errands, and he scrambled up a smart phone and got a few pictures, as did Paul himself when back on the ground.

I watched with some trepidation as Paul and Larry first figured out how to operate the manlift, a Z34/22E articulated electric, which had been delivered at 9:00 am — an hour early — by Star Rentals on Industrial Way. Paul, in the bucket, steered it around the building, managing some tight corners, to arrive at the launch site about ten feet from the chimney. Would this machine reach the top of the chimney?

Paul and David went up in the bucket to scope it out. And horrors! The darn thing was two feet too short! What to do now? Brainstorming time.

They decided to snug the lift up as close as the curb and fence would allow, and to rise up at a more advantageous angle.



Larry went up with Paul this time and, channeling his inner rock climber, got his head and arms over the lip of the chimney to see what the grate looked like and what tools it would take to lift it out of there. Somehow, he still had two feet on the bucket.

Back on the ground (which sounds like a given, but you wonder about it each time the machine balks at responding to your button-pushing), we brainstormed again, and retired to the "man room," the former classroom now housing all manner of tools and building materials in splendid disarray. I muttered something like, "MacGyver would be in heaven here."

We were there poking around until we had fashioned a couple rods with hooks deftly attached, such that the grate could be snagged and levered up and out. Paul and Larry were in their element; I was stewing about missing my Tai Chi for Arthritis class.

Makeshift tools and ropes in hand, and Larry fitted out in a harness Paul had dug up, we launched again for the (hopefully) final effort in the manlift. Wonder of wonders, the plan worked like a charm! Larry in harness got the grate out by hook or crook (what could go wrong?), David snapped a couple pictures, and Paul landed the manlift with expert precision.

And the audience cheered (well, that would be me) as curious swifts flew about overhead in a bright, blue sky. Four happy grate-busters were ready for lunch.

*All images provided by Paul and David Rice.  
(WHAS paid for the rental of the manlift).*



### Continued from page one: Slow Down and Smell The Roses

I once spied a male crossbill on the guardrail of a curvy section of SR4. I also noticed the female in the middle of the road just feet away. When I reached her, she was dead. Still, I placed her off the highway and in the grass, lest her mate, the anxious male, might meet the same fate in her defense.

Another time in Warrenton a mother mallard duck gamely headed across 101 with 7 or 8 chicks in line behind her, in a brief gap in the traffic. By chance I happened to be the first car in one lane to come upon her, so I stopped in my lane and got out to help. As the traffic from the other direction approached, I stood tall and made the universal signal to slow down to the nearing driver, but she blasted through, ran over several ducklings and sent the mallard hen skittering back to whence she came.

I'm convinced that at least part of the problem is speed. Nature just hasn't prepared creatures to evade an object hurtling along at, in my anecdotal analysis, anything above 50 mph. The other part is lack of attention.

Statistics seem to bear this out. A 2014 study estimated that up to 350 million birds are killed each year in the USA by vehicles, carnage only exceeded by birds killed by cats and by windows. A short stretch of roadway in Florida was shown to have been fatal to over 500 birds a year, many of them songbirds that motorists might not have even noticed.

Lights during night driving kill large numbers of owls, studies show. Along a 150 mile stretch of highway in Idaho, as

an example, some 1500 barn were killed in a single year. One researcher collected over one hundred dead barn owls in a single day along that swatch of Idaho road.

The thing is we can individually make a difference by slowing down, particularly at night, and especially in places where birds are visible along roads and flying over them, like swallows. We can tap the horn when helpful. We can admonish others when we are passengers to do the same. We can slow down and smell the roses.

About a year ago, on my way to Cathlamet for groceries one morning, I saw a tree swallow lying in the middle of the highway just at the base of KM Hill. It was a stretch where the swallows must have nested, near a pond where I often see hooded mergansers, teal and even herons. I pressed on but promised to stop on my way home, thinking the poor thing already dead. When I returned the little form was right in the tire track, clearly having been swept about by the wind wash from the trucks and cars. As I approached I could see and hear other sparrows along the grass fringe and chortling anxiously. To my surprise it was a fledgling on the road, still alive, obviously newly emerged from the nest and not strong enough to fly. I gently picked up the youngster and placed it in the grass, well off the edge of the highway, nearby the pond.

There were no roses but I could smell the cottonwoods, and the singing of the swallows serenaded me as I walked back to my car.

### Continued from page one: Come Volunteer at the Children's Discovery Museum

Willapa Hills Audubon Society is a partner with the Children's Discovery Museum at the Three Rivers Mall in Kelso. WHAS sponsors the Nature Niche, a series of touch tables and drawers filled with natural objects like feathers, nests, bones, rocks, minerals, fossils, shells, insects and plant parts. Microscopes are available for close-up viewing. Children of all ages are welcome there, but most of our patrons are in second grade or younger and accompanied by their parents. Admission is free. The museum served over 10,000 children last year during its hours of operation: Sundays 11-4, Wednesdays 11-4, and Fridays 4-7. Beginning June 18, it will also be open Tuesdays from 11-4. The museum is an asset to the community as a place where kids can learn through play. It features not only the Nature Niche but also the giant Lincoln Logs, wind tunnel, ping-pong ball shower, toy doctor and dentist offices, farm to table market, school room, harmonograph, dance corner, puppet theater, and cultural exhibit. WHAS also provides a circulating library of nature books. Science Sundays are offered monthly. It is delightful to watch the many ways the children enjoy the museum experience.

But the museum and the Nature Niche could use more help! It takes volunteers to keep it going. The core staff are members of AmeriCorps and are sometimes called away by AmeriCorps activities. Other volunteers include parents, high

school students earning community service, board members, and two WHAS volunteers. We are looking for more volunteers, especially those who enjoy sharing nature and would be willing to work in the Nature Niche. It requires more attention than the



other exhibits to ensure careful handling of the specimens and to provide assistance with the microscopes. Volunteers with enthusiasm about the natural world who can relate well to children are the most effective—and have the most fun! It can be very rewarding to help a child explore something from the real world like the feel of moving a feather or their “wingspan” compared with our wooden bird wing models. And the children find the

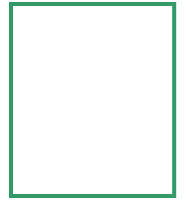
best inspiration when they can learn from a variety of facilitators, each with a unique personal style of interaction. Volunteers don't have to be experts: they do share a sense of wonder.

We invite you, Willapa Hills Audubon Society members, and your friends to come enjoy this special experience as volunteers for the Children's Discovery Museum. Our volunteers must be at least 13 years old. The application is available at <http://childrensdiscovery360.org>. A background check is also required. Hours can be flexible and there is an electronic sign-up system. Adult volunteers can bring their children to the museum while they work. We welcome your participation in giving children the gift of nature and offering them these adventures!





PO Box 399  
Longview, WA 98632



The *Willapa Whistler* is the quarterly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Complimentary copies are available for free on our website.

**TEMP -- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the public.**

### **Send in your stories & photos**

Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are most welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, May, August and November. Send your contributions to:

*WHAS Whistler*, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

or email them to

[newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org).

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## **WHAS Programs and Field Trips**

WHAS events are free and open to the public (Unless otherwise noted). Check the website for the latest information and updates.

### **2019 Willapa Hills Annual Summer Picnic**

The Willapa Hills Audubon Annual picnic will be held on Sunday, July 21, 2019 from 2:00 PM until 5:00 PM at the Brandt residence in Cathlamet WA. more info on page 1

**Other programs and field trips will appear on our website and will be announced through our email alert system.**  
More information about the alert system here: <http://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/member-services>

*The Mission of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society is to support ecologically responsible ways of life, to help maintain biologically diverse habitats, and to promote environmental understanding and enjoyment of nature.*

**Updates are on our website at [www.willapahillsaudubon.org](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org)**